

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-21. (Cancelled)

22. (New) A method for sterilizing and producing a fish-paste product by utilizing microbubbles, the method comprising:

adding ozone gas-containing microbubbles generated in water to raw materials of a fish-paste product, the microbubbles having a diameter of 50 µm or less;

coating the interfaces of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles with tissues contained in raw materials of the fish-paste product thereby creating coating shells made of the tissues to maintain the longevity of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles, the shells covering the ozone gas-containing microbubbles;

giving stimulation to a part of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles thereby rupturing the coating shells of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles while the ozone gas-containing microbubbles are in the fish-paste product, thereby sterilizing the fish paste product by the formation of active oxygen and free-radical species; and

repeating said operation of giving stimulation to a part of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles after processing and packaging the fish-paste product.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein said operation of adding ozone gas-containing microbubbles comprises adding water containing the ozone gas-containing microbubbles.

24. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein said operation of adding ozone gas-containing microbubbles comprises spraying a mist of water containing the ozone gas-containing microbubbles.

25. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the tissues include protein and lipid contained in the fish-paste product.

26. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the stimulation comprises rubbing together raw materials of the fish-paste products while pestling the raw materials.

27. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the stimulation comprises high-frequency irradiation of raw materials of the fish-paste product.

28. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the stimulation comprises microwave irradiation of raw materials of the fish-paste product.

29. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the stimulation comprises heating raw materials of the fish-paste product.

30. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein said operation of giving stimulation to a part of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles does not rupture all of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles.

31. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the stimulation comprises rubbing together raw materials of the fish-paste products while pestling the raw materials, and wherein the pestling is continued for 20 minutes during which the relative speed of a pestle to a mortar is kept as 15 cm/s.

32. (New) A method for producing a fish-paste product, the method comprising:
adding ozone gas-containing microbubbles generated in water to raw materials of the fish-paste product;
coating interfaces of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles with protein and lipid in the raw materials, thereby creating coating shells made of the protein and lipid;
rupturing the coating shells of a portion of the ozone-gas containing microbubbles in the raw materials to form active oxygen and free radical species, thereby sterilizing the raw materials; and
rupturing the coating shells of another portion of the ozone gas-containing microbubbles after processing and packaging the fish-paste product to form further active oxygen and free radical species, thereby sterilizing the fish-paste product.